



## **State of Connecticut**

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### **TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINE RAPILLO EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER**

### **COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY MARCH 2, 2009**

### **RAISED BILL NO. 6574, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE TRAINING SCHOOL AND OTHER JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES**

The Office of the Chief Public Defender opposes **Raised Bill No. 6574, An Act Concerning the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and Other Juvenile Detention Facilities** and urges the Committee to reject his proposal. This bill directs the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families to obtain municipal approval for the establishment of new juvenile detention facilities. This is ineffective, since the state's detention facilities are under the control of the Judicial Branch and not the Department of Children and Families and would effectively prohibit the construction of any new facilities.

This bill would require the approval of city councils or boards of selectmen before the population of existing detention facilities or the Connecticut Juvenile Training School was increased. This proposal is unworkable. The proposal as written requires approval for any increase in the number of residents. It does not regulate overall capacity but the actual number of residents. The population in the detention centers and CJTS changes daily as children make their way through the court process. **Raised Bill 6574** appears to require municipal approval every time a court ordered admission increases the population. This would require daily approval. Any proposal that gives cities and towns the ability to control the population of a state run facility jeopardizes the safe operation of the detention system.

This bill does not make financial sense, as it prevents the state from trying to utilize unused resources. Due to the success of new programs and an overall decrease in the number of

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Judiciary Committee, March 2, 2009  
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juvenile court referrals, there is currently excess capacity at all juvenile detention centers and at CJTS. These are expensive, high security beds that we pay for even if they are not filled. One proposal to implement the Raise the Age legislation to include 16 year olds would fill these empty spots and free up space at Department of Corrections' facilities, which are dangerously overcrowded. It is good public policy to try to utilize unused resources and municipalities should not be able to veto good policy that helps the overall well being of the state. We urge the Committee to reject this proposal.